CLAIMS

I claim:

1.   An automated system for generating
authorized drafts on a plurality of financial
accounts belonging to a plurality of payors, in
payment of debts to a payee, comprising:

input means for performing an electronic
information input process in which input
information is received, including a manual input
of account identification information sufficient
to identify a particular one of said payor
financial accounts and a financial institution
holding said account, and amount information
defining an amount to be paid to said payee;

processing means connected to said input
means for receiving said input information and
processing said information to format a draft on
said financial account payable to said payee, said
draft format including identification of said
financial account, identification of said
financial institution holding said financial
account, and an instruction to pay said amount to
said payee including particular identification of
said payee, and further including a signatory
block for an authorizing signature other than said
payor's signature;

output means for transferring said draft
format to an external magnetic printing means
connectable to said processing means for
generating a paper copy of said draft using
magnetically encoded ink and printing fonts
compatible with clearing house check processing
equipment.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein said external magnetic printing means is a laser printer using an MICR toner cartridge.

3. The system of claim 1 further comprising verification means connected to said input means and said processing means for verifying the validity of at least part of said input information from said input means.

4. The system of claim 3 wherein said verification means comprises a database of financial institution identification information, and wherein said verification means operates to compare a portion of said input information from said input means to said financial institution identification information and , to provide thereafter an output indication if said input information does not correctly identify a financial institution for which information is present in said database.

5. The system of claim 4 wherein said verification means operates to perform said comparison of a portion of said input information from said input means to said financial institution identification information during the information input process of said input means and provides immediately thereafter an indication to the operator if said input information does not correctly identify a financial institution for which information is present in said database.

6. The system of claim 5 wherein the input means operates to receive a financial institution identification number used in check processing.

7. The system of claim 3 wherein said input means receives an account number identifying said financial account and said verification means checks said account number according to a predetermined algorithm to determine whether said account number can be a valid account number, and thereafter provides an output indication if such processing determines that said account number may be invalid.

8. The system of claim 7 wherein said verification means checks said account number during said information input process to determine whether said account number can be a valid account number, and thereafter immediately provides an indication to said operator if such processing determines that said account number may be invalid.

9. The system of claim 3 wherein said data input means further receives the postal address of said payor and said verification means further comprises a database of high-risk postal zone codes which have been empirically associated with an elevated risk of payment fraud, said verification means operating to compare said postal address of said payor with said postal zone code database and providing an output indication when said payor's postal address is one of said high-risk postal zone codes, whereby additional

steps may be taken to verify the ability to process said draft.

10. The system of claim 9 wherein said output indication is provided to the operator during said information input process.

11. The system of claim 1 further comprising scheduling means connected to said input means and said processing means for receiving information defining a postdated draft to be generated by the system, said draft to have a date not prior to a specified future date.

12. The system of claim 11 wherein said scheduling means includes storage means for storing said postdated draft information and for recalling said information and generating said draft on or after said specified date.

13. The system of claim 12 further comprising notification means associated with said scheduling means for automatically generating a written notice to said payor indicating that said authorized future draft will be generated and deposited as a draft against said payor's account.

14. The system of claim 8 wherein said scheduling means schedules the generation of said drafts at regular periodic intervals.

15. The system of claim 11 wherein said scheduling m ans schedules generation of said drafts on dates specified by said payor and having

amounts specified by said payor to complete a payment of said debt.

16. The system of claim 1 wherein a plurality of said input means are provided at different locations and connected to transmit said input information to said processing means which is installed at a central location to produce drafts for said plurality of input means.

17. The system of claim 16 further comprising verification means associated with said plurality of input means for verifying the validity of at least part of said input information from said input means.

18. The system of claim 17 wherein said verification means comprises a database of financial institution identification information, and wherein said verification means operates to compare a portion of said input information from said input means to said financial institution identification information during the information input process of said input means and to provide immediately thereafter an indication to the operator if said input information does not correctly identify a financial institution for which information is present in said database.

19. The system of claim 1 wherein said system is implemented on a computer using software which incorporates security measures for preventing fraudulent draft production, said security measures comprising the coded imbedding of said payee identification information in said

software so that payee information appearing on said drafts cannot be readily modified by a p rson gaining unauthorized access to said software.

20. A process for making immediate automated payments from a payor having a financial account at a financial institution to a payee, comprising the steps of:

providing an automated draft production computing system which receives input information and formats, in response to said input information, a draft on said payor's financial account payable to said payee, said draft format including identification of said financial account, identification of said financial institution holding said financial account, and an instruction to pay said amount to said payee including particular identification of said payee, and further including a signatory block for an authorizing signature other than said payor's signature;

obtaining said input information and authorization for draft production from the payor;

entering said input information into said automated draft production computing system;

printing said authorized draft payable to said payee on a printing device, said draft having thereon financial institution and account information printed using fonts and ink compatible with banking system automated check clearing systems such that said draft can be automatically processed by said check clearing systems; and

submitting said draft to said automated check clearing system for further processing therein to

cause a transf r of funds from said payor account to said payee.

21. The process of claim 20 comprising the further step of verifying the accuracy of said input information within said automated draft production computing system by comparing said input information to at least one database accessible by said automated draft production computing system.

22. The process of claim 21 wherein said verification step occurs at least in part during the step of entering data defining the draft.

23. The process of claim 20 wherein in said system provision step said draft production computing system is provided in geographically separated components, including a plurality of dispersed data entry computing systems for performing data collection and verification functions, with each said data entry computing system connected to transmit to a central draft production center draft production data defining the draft to be printed, such that the step of printing said draft is performed at said central draft production center, said process including the further step of transmitting said draft production data to said central draft production center to cause production of said draft.

24. The process of claim 20 further including the step of collecting said data and obtaining authorization for said draft from the

payor in a t lephonic conversation prior to said data ntry step.

25. The process of claim 24 comprising the further step of verifying the accuracy of said input information within said automated draft production computing system during the step of entering said data by comparing said input information to at least one database accessible by said automated draft production computing system.